



Commonwealth of Kentucky Energy and Environment Cabinet

Steven L. Beshear, Governor

Len Peters, Secretary

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

CONTACT: Allison Fleck, 502-564-3410

Kentucky Division of Water warns of dangers associated with floodwater

Power outages, flooding continue in some areas

FRANKFORT, KY – (May 4, 2010) – As flood conditions persist in some areas of the Commonwealth following last weekend's storms, the Kentucky Division of Water urges residents to take heed of local flood warnings and to be aware of the dangers associated with floodwater.

Avoid contact with floodwater. Whether on foot or in a vehicle, do not attempt to cross flooded streets or enter flooded areas. The depths are difficult to determine and floodwater typically moves much faster than it appears. It may also carry large debris, which can cause injury.

Drowning, injury and property loss aren't the only risks that flood waters present. During heavy rains, sanitary sewers may overflow and septic fields may leak into floodwaters. Avoid contact with floodwater due to potential contamination with raw sewage and other hazardous substances. Avoid swimming and boating in floodwaters, and do not allow children or pets to wade or play in floodwaters.

Flood water also poses the danger of electrical shock. Downed wires pose a serious electrical hazard in flooded areas. This is another reason why it is so important to stay out of flood water until professional rescue crews arrive.

Do not consume food or water that has been exposed to flood water. Whether you have a well, spring water, or city water, the system may have been contaminated by flood waters. Consumption of contaminated water can cause diarrhea and other gastrointestinal problems, including E. coli infection. Have a professional test your water

after the flood to be sure it is safe for consumption. Until then, drink bottled water or use emergency disinfection methods.

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) offers the following guidelines associated with cleaning up after a flood:

- Wash your hands before drinking and eating.
- Wash frequently using soap -- especially disinfecting soap.
- Do not smoke due to the possible presence of fuels on the water.
- Wear protective clothing and gloves and limit direct contact with flood water. Chemicals, animals, and debris can cause serious illness or injury. It is also a good idea to wear a protective mask when cleaning up after a flood. Many of the chemicals or mold can cause respiratory problems.
- Remember that electrical lines and water do not mix. Even if you do not have power in some locations in your house, not all the lines may be dead.
- If your house is flooded, so is your septic tank or sewage system. Raw sewage is extremely dangerous and can carry a multitude of infectious agents. Be sure your plumbing system is in tact before resuming your daily routines in your home.
- Pay attention to any cuts or open wounds and limit exposure to flood water.
- Pay attention to any unusual symptoms and report them to health care professionals.
- Keep vaccinations current.

Once the cleanup is complete, contact a certified home inspector to check for unseen damages. Structural problems are not always apparent once the flood waters recede. A good inspector will check the structure of the house, the electrical system, the heating and cooling system, the sewage system and other potential problem areas.

For more information on flood dangers and precautionary measures, visit this EPA Web site at <http://www.epa.gov/naturaldisasters/flooding.html>

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